The Builder.

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THE recent discussions, or rather conversations, in the House of Lords, respecting the new Houses of Parliament, will, it is to be feared, greatly affect the successful execution of the works, and must be regarded with considerable interest by the profession, if not by the public at large. Their lordships, the Peers, it seems, are not conveniently located; their temporary house is found, when they assemble in any number, to be confined and ill-ventilated, to say nothing of its want of grandeur and effect; and they are therefore most anxious, and have been for a long time past, to force forward this portion of the general design, quite irrespective of the other parts. A committee, appointed by their lordships, have from time to time examined Mr. Barry, and Mr. Grissell the contractor, to ascertain the progress made, and have led the former, by their urgency, to promise the completion of their portion of the building earlier than, under the various circumstances which control him, was possible.

"Would it not go on faster," said the committee, "if every man and every stone now employed on the building generally were applied to the House of Lords alone?" And when the architect said "Yes," in reply, they ordered that every man and every stone *should* be so employed. If Mr. Barry had been an older practitioner, and had felt himself sufficiently firm in his position to brave the displeasure of the committee, he would at once have told their lordships that such a proceeding was quite out of the question; that he had other masters to regard,—the Commissioners of Woods and Works, the Commissioners of Fine Arts, the various officers of the Houses, all pressing their several claims; that he had the public to consider, and his own reputation as an artist; moreover, that it was not simply unwise, but impossible. As it was, however, he seems to have allowed the committee to consider that their instruction would be complied with, and was induced, under pressure, to name an earlier date for the completion of the House of Lords than he should have done.

As regards the general progress of the works, the most casual examination of the structure, with due consideration of the elaborate nature of the carved decorations, unexampled in modern days, will serve to shew that no time has been lost or efforts spared. It is now four years since Grissell and Peto laid the first stone (the foundations being already formed),—what are four years for such an undertaking?—and from that time to this 400 men have been constantly employed *on the ground*, with many more in preparing elsewhere, and have never been kept waiting by the architect.

Some persons think, if we may use the word where no thought is really given, that when an architect has produced the design for a building his work is over, and that it may, without further thought, be forthwith carried out. Nothing is more erroneous, especially as regards Gothic architecture: it is then that the architect's labour commences, and his skill is proved. In such a work as the Houses of Parliament, every superficial yard demands the closest thought, and requires as many detailed drawings as for the whole of an ordinary dwelling-house. Every ornament, every moulding, every line, must be produced and delineated; and over all these does Mr. Barry's own pencil pass. An architect careless of his reputation may get through any amount of work, *by deputy*; but if determined to execute it to the best of his power, strive as he may, he can only produce a certain quantity, and we will venture to say that the architect of the new Houses of Parliament finds little time for other occupations or recreation from early on Monday morning till late on Saturday night. The wear and tear must be immense.

The life of an architect even under favourable circumstances is one of toil and anxiety; and he needs to have no extraneous circumstances to harass and perplex him. We have heard a member of the lower House declare his ability to write poetry by the mile; we may probably find one of the upper House profess the power to design gothic details by the acre, and laugh at the idea of limits to a man's power in so simple a matter. They would be equally entitled to credence: we should merely say they were exceptions from the general rule.

In judging of the asserted delay, which, according to Lord Brougham, has given Mr. Barry the name of delay (as Quintilian said of Tully, that he was not only an orator, but the name of eloquence), the public should bear in mind that the river front which they see is only one-third of the whole structure, much of which they cannot see. The buildings altogether cover eleven acres, and their cubical contents have been estimated at half as much more than the contents of St. Paul's Cathedral, which occupied about five and thirty years in building, without any material interruptions. They should also know that the whole building is made fire-proof, and that the difficulty of combining this with Dr. Reid's extraordinary arrangements for ventilating the structure and taking off the smoke, has been immense. Over these latter the architect has up to this time had no control; but so much delay and inconvenience has been caused by them that a rupture has occurred, and it now rests with the ruling powers to establish the supremacy of one party or the other. We do not wish ourselves to throw any blame on Dr. Reid; the whole is an experiment, and its magnitude is so great as necessarily to demand much deliberation, but it is too bad that an architect's operations should be suspended, his designs altered, and his views interfered with; and then that he should be blamed for what has been done against his will. The work in the lobby of the House of Lords was delayed six whole months because the system of ventilation there was not determined on.

The Peers now insist on having their house ready for occupation in February next, and the greatest efforts are consequently being made. All the walls and the ceiling are to be covered with carved wood-work of the most elaborate character, and this is being forced on by 150 additional workmen much more rapidly than is desirable. It will probably be ready for fixing about October, and instead of remaining as it should do in the drying rooms during the winter ready for fixing in the summer, will be taken into the new building in the bad weather, and probably be irreparably injured. Do what they will, moreover, the House of Lords *cannot be completed by the time named*, nor is it desirable that it should be. Surely, if their lordships would consider that this building is not simply for some immediate or temporary purpose, but is intended to last for ages, and that the great object should be not to do it quickly but well, they would restrain their impatience and allow the architect to work out efficiently the whole design. If the present accommodation is bad, let it be made better; re-construct the temporary House of Lords during the ensuing vacation, and persuade them to put up with the indignity yet a little longer, so that their order may be worthily lodged ever *after*. The architects of the middle ages produced the noble works to which we now appeal with pride, slowly, by degrees, and as works of love; at least let us give the nineteenth century one chance, and not by unnecessary and child-like haste, risk adding another failure to the crowd which already disgrace it.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ARCHITECTURE FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

THE XANTHIAN MARBLES.

WE have directed attention, in previous numbers of THE BUILDER, to the want of a museum for British antiquities, and those of the middle ages generally. But if we mention the continued want in this particular, it is right to recollect, that excellent provision is made, at least, for the antiquities of the ancients. The general arrangements of the British Museum are conducted on a scale of munificence, productive of the greatest benefits to all classes. The collection has become so extensive, that it is quite impossible to be acquainted with all the treasures it contains, even in one particular line of study, whilst the most valuable fragments can never be examined without suggesting fresh points for inquiry. It will be our object in some future numbers of this journal to direct the attention of the architect, and the decorative artist, to such portions of the collection as bear upon their peculiar pursuits. The art of sculpture occupies a large space, but most of the examples are equally interesting to the architect, and afford even the forms of the furniture, and of many utensils of the ancients. Lately the collection in the Elgin room has been enriched with casts from some remaining portions of the Parthenon. Amongst these is the sacred owl of Minerva. There is also a cast of the capital, from the monument of Lysicrates. No one can examine the figures from the temple, which are at present deposited in the Museum, without wonder at the careful execution in objects so far removed from the spectator; but the wonder is greatly increased on finding from the work of Revett and Stuart, that the Elgin marbles form a very small part of those formerly existing. This may also be seen on referring to a restoration of the pediment, or to the large models of the temple in its present, and its original state, now constructing in the Elgin room. But the most important acquisition, which the Museum has received, since the Phigalian friese, is that of the Xanthian marbles. These have previously been described, but their architectural interest leads us again to refer to them.

The country of Asia Minor occupied an important position in the ancient world, and one strongly contrasted with its present state, regarding which there is still great want of information. Few have contributed more to a knowledge of its ancient state than Mr., now Sir Charles Fellows, to whom we are indebted for the transmission of the Xanthian marbles to England, and who has published two journals of his visits, and an account of the proceedings at the ancient city. The tombs of Asia Minor are probably as curious as the receptacles for the dead in any country, not only from their immense number, but their forms and workmanship. Whilst the character of their sculptures proves many of them to have been of the best age of Greek art, their architectural character is often singular and unintelligible. There are among them, not only isolated constructions, but also, and perhaps in greater number, excavations like the Roman tombs of Petra. Many of them shew a closer similarity to timber construction, than is observable in the Doric temple of the European

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